

vertebrates in addition to vegetation. Eastern box turtles are largely terrestrial and often found away from water, but they will enter water during dry, hot weather.

The project study area offers various types of habitat for birds including open fields, residential areas, forests of various ages and types, open water, stream banks, cutovers, and wetlands. This habitat diversity provided an opportunity for a wide variety of bird species to be observed within the project study area. Predatory birds observed within the project study area included the red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), \* barred owl (*Strix varia*),\* Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*),\* and red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*). \* These predatory birds mainly consume rodents and other small animals, and nest above the ground. A bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)\* was sighted perched in a tree within the project study area; however, no nesting sites were identified during field investigations. The bald eagle primarily feeds on fish; therefore, it is often found near open water. Great blue herons (*Ardea herodias*)\* were commonly observed along stream banks and pond edges within the project study area. Great blue herons feed primarily on fish and other animals that live in or near the water, and nest in the tops of tall trees near water.

During the months of March, April, and May an assemblage of migratory song birds was observed within the project study area. During the spring, as the weather warms and defoliating insects emerge, these migratory birds inhabit forests throughout North Carolina as they move northward. Migratory species observed within the project study area include the summer tanager (*Piranga rubra*), \* blue grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*), \* indigo bunting (*Passerina cyanea*), \* white-eyed vireo (*Vireo griseus*), \* common yellowthroat (*Geothlypis trichas*), \* black and white warbler (*Mniotilta varia*), \* prairie warbler (*Dendroica discolor*), \* and hooded warbler (*Wilsonia citrine*). \* The diets of these birds may include a combination of seeds, berries, vegetation, worms, and insects. Their nests are generally above ground, usually in trees or shrubs.

Game species such as American woodcock (*Scolopax minor*), \* Northern bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*),\* Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*),\* mourning dove (*Zenaidura macroura*),\* and wood duck (*Aix sponsa*)\* were also present within the project study area. Aside from the mourning dove and wood duck, these birds nest on the ground. Scavengers such as the turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*)\* and black vulture (*Coragyps atratus*)\* were also found in the project study area. These birds feed primarily on fresh or rotting carrion and roost singly or communally at night. A list of all bird species observed within the project study area is included in the NRTR.

A diverse mammal population is expected to be associated with the communities present within the project study area. Recent cutover areas throughout the project study area offer habitat for the eastern cottontail (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), \* and whitetailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*). \* These cutover areas are also inhabited by the gray fox (*Urocyon cinereoargenteus*)\* which rely on rabbits and other small mammals as their primary food source. Mammals observed near streams and wetlands throughout the project study area included muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*),\* beaver (*Castor canadensis*), \* and mink (*Mustela vison*). \* Other mammals observed within the project study area included Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*), \* raccoon (*Procyon lotor*),\* eastern mole (*Sealopus aquaticus*),\* and bobcat (*Felis rufus*). \* The agricultural fields within the project study area likely support small rodents such as the eastern harvest mouse